

Question & Answer Session
CWNS 2008 Training: Clean Watersheds Needs Survey 101
August 7, 2008

Q: Approximately how much time does it take to collect and enter required data?

A: According to our last Information Collection Rule (ICR), EPA estimates about 1.5 hours per facility. EPA received feedback in 2006 from several state CWNS Coordinators indicating that this amount is roughly on target. In addition, there is some additional effort when coordinators interact with local facilities to get the data in the survey.

Q: Are there any of the professional groups, ad-hoc advisors, or members of the Data Submission and Review Methods Subcommittee (DSARMS) familiar with stormwater needs, in particular the costs associated with retrofitting of municipal stormwater systems to treat runoff?

A: I don't believe any of the local advisors are experts in that area. Some of the DSARMS members are knowledgeable of stormwater management issues via their state's State Revolving Fund (SRF) program's funding of stormwater projects. If anyone is interested in helping our efforts from here-on-forward, we are appreciative. Please send a follow-up notice after the Web seminar to cwns@epa.gov.

Q: Do you want unit process data for every treatment plant that has a capital improvement need?

A: The unit process data in the needs survey is currently optional data for all the facilities, including treatment plants. It has been optional in the last several surveys.

Q: Slide #38: what is the difference between the column titled "Need_Amt" and the one titled "Needs"?

A: The "need amount" is the need for the category specified in the report—in this example category II. The category II is reported as the "need amount," \$16 million. The "needs" column is the total needs of the report.

Q: What the value of this effort is other than reporting to Congress?

A: EPA has been trying on several fronts to make the data more useful for secondary purposes.

- *The AskWATERS reports go towards meeting that goal. The reports, available at http://www.epa.gov/waters/tools/ask_waters/index.html and allow users to search CWNS data at the national, state, regional, county, and watershed level.*
- *There are various state-level programmatic uses for the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) and permitting programs, as well as other programs. These programs use several components of the data collected in the survey, particularly the future projections (e.g., projected population served; projected flows). This data is very useful for modeling different scenarios.*
- *Targeted uses by Congress and State legislatures related to specific legislation that is being examined at the National or State level. These legislatures refer to the needs survey for specific data, such as stormwater needs, to inform policy-making.*

- CWNS data is used for university research projects
 - The data is used as a baseline for a lot of other Agencies' surveys..
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Q: Slide 44: For decentralized needs, will needs for privately owned, but publicly managed onsite repairs/upgrades be accepted?

A: That is currently the draft that is under management review over the next couple months. We are trying to get a resolution on all the final eligibility issues. A final decision has not been made by management. We will include this information in a future communication.

Q: Can you give us some examples of a "State Approved Area-Wide/Region Basin Plan" might include?

A: Clean Water Act section 208 and 303(e) Regional Basin Plans are broad-based water quality management plans written primarily to identify future planning for areas within a state. These reports study large areas such as basins or counties and usually recommend general solutions to current or anticipated wastewater needs within the planning area. Only section 208 and 303(e) documents that contain site-specific information and a description of a need may be accepted as documentation of need. Documentation of cost is assessed on a case-by-case basis depending on the amount of detail reported and the source of the information.

Example from the Eastern part of the state of Washington: The region is hilly with a particular type soil and a lot of agricultural activity. The plan documents a significant problem with sediment in stormwater run-off. The plan recommends that traditional cropping methods be converted to various forms of direct seeding and other no till methods. Therefore, the "State Approved Area-Wide/Region Basin Plan" can document the water-quality need (reduce sediment in run-off) and the solution (changes in agricultural practices). Another example from Washington is a big area-wide plan that looks at what is needed to correct septic system problems in the Puget Sound. In addition to the above, many states have plans in place related to endangered species.

Q: Would Watershed Management Plans or Watershed Protection Plans might fall into the category "State Approved Area-Wide/Region Basin Plan"?

A: No. Watershed-based Plans are considered their own document type. More information on CWNS Documentation will be provided in the September 11 web seminar.

Q: Will stormwater projects/upgrades that are highlighted in State-approved TMDL Action Plans be considered as 'acceptable documentation' for CWNS needs?

A: There are two parts to this answer. TMDL and regional plans can be used to document needs. Acceptability of cost information in these documents is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. If there is detailed cost information, that is acceptable. If not, supplemental source will be needed to document the cost.

Q: Can we use a Regional Water Board TMDL Staff Fact Sheets to support \$Billion Cost Estimates and Water Quality Needs for a Watershed TMDL?

A: These and other documents not on the standard CWNS document type list are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. If these other documents meet the seven CWNS documentation criteria, they can be used. EPA encourages States to submit examples of these documents during the innovative methods pre-approval process so that evaluation of documents meeting criteria can be made prior to States' investing resources in using these documents in needs submittals.

Q: Who at the local level would receive notices/data regarding the survey from the State (e.g. DPW, town administrator, health dept., etc.)?

A: It varies state by state. Some states send it out to Wastewater Treatment plants, or facility operators. Some send it to local agencies. In addition, this year we have launched a national outreach effort to reach local communities. In the October and November, the Web seminars will focus on efforts to reach small communities, the stormwater community, the nonpoint source community, and onsite regulators. For a particular state, the best bet is to contact your CWNS State Coordinator. To find you state and/or EPA regional CWNS coordinators, visit <http://www.epa.gov/cwns/whereyoulive.htm>.

Q: Does the CWNS data drive the allocation of State Revolving Fund (SRF) funds between states?

A: The answer to that is "yes" and "no". In the Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 205 indicates that (1) the allotment of SRF funds should be updated based on results of the needs survey and (2) there has to be a specific Act of Congress to enact that update. This specific Act of Congress has not happened since the 1987 amendments to the CWA. Our EPA management believes it will happen by the time the 2008 Survey is finalized.

Q: If a second state agency is responsible for onsite systems, can both agencies have access to the data entry independently?

A: Yes, they can. This is one of the aspects of the new Data Entry System. State CWNS coordinators can provide access to all or a subset of CWNS projects/facilities to other state staff (including staff at other agencies).

Q: Do the CWNS state coordinators have to approve secondary users?

A: Yes, the CWNS State Coordinators will be approving all secondary State users and local users that apply for access to the system.

Q: Does the optional data on "Privately Owned" treatment plants include industrial facilities?

A: The optional data can include industrial facilities. There are very few of them in the needs survey, but the data entry system does support this. If a state decide to include them, they will be accepted.

Q: Slide 56 (and subsequent slides): Will members of the general public be able to establish an account and access data in the CWNS?

A: This is targeted only for members of the public that are environmental professionals (e.g., treatment plant operators; people in charge of certain non-point source projects) who have information to submit to the State Coordinators to be included in the needs survey. It will not be available for the general public. There will be an Internet screen for anyone to apply for an account (which is not shown in the presentation). The State Coordinator will evaluate if it is appropriate for the applicant to have an account and if so, what sort of access that person should have.

Q: Beyond the data collection phase (intended to end in Sept. 2008), what is the timeline for other phases of the CWNS, including final report to Congress?

A: The data collection is scheduled for January through October 2008. Following data collection, there is about four months (until about Spring of 2009) of data quality analysis and review. After ensuring the quality of the data, EPA works on various drafts of the Report to Congress; the drafts need to go through the EPA internal review process. Summer 2009 is the target for completing the EPA internal review process. Then EPA submits the report to the President's Office of Management and Budget (OMB). For the 2008 survey, EPA plans to do the OMB review process differently than it did for the 2004 survey. OMB has a formal tiering system. It is extra hoops to jump to get into the tiering system, but getting into the tiering system establishes a timeline of expectations for the review process. EPA did not tier the report before, but it plans to put it into the tier system in 2008 to try to get a more responsive turn-around from the OMB review.

Q: TMDLs become part of our local MS4 Permit. Can we use that Permit Number for a NPS Project?

A: Yes. In certain cases, permit numbers are relevant for non-point source projects, and that is a case-by-case evaluation. So, if a state permit does have information that relates to NPS projects, yes, they can be put into the Data Entry system. We do not use the automated links to pull in permit data for those types of projects, but they can be manually be put into the data entry system.

Q: Most of the documents I receive are hard copies, not computer files. Will I have to start getting the computer files for these documents or will the hard copies still be accepted?

A: Yes, we will continue to accept both electronic and hard copies of documents for 2008. States can decide whether it is easier to scan documents in or mail EPA the hard copy); either way is acceptable.

Q: Slide 65: For population and flow, does existing means 2008 or what year?

A: Yes, for the flow information existing means 2008 or whatever is most current as of the start of 2008. Sometimes there are limits to the available data. For flow information, summary information, extracted from EPA's Compliance Permit System(PCS) and Integrated Compliance Information System (ICIS), will summarize the most current flow information. .

Q: 2008 CWNS appears to continue to focus mainly on point source needs. The costs for implementing MS4 programs can be very costly and funding at this time is extremely competitive. How are EPA and

state coordinators reaching out to the local jurisdictions?

A: EPA is trying hard to give increased focus not only on Stormwater Management needs, but also nonpoint source pollution control needs and decentralized wastewater treatment needs. EPA is undertaking a variety of efforts at the National level to enhance the interaction between stormwater personnel at the local and State level with the CWNS community. Ms. Fligger has been working on outreach materials. We are working with Mr. Nikos Singelis at the EPA's Stormwater program to convey the message that: (1) it is important and valued for stormwater personnel to participate in the survey, and (2) the data entry system is providing functionality to support that. At the State level, EPA is encouraging the CWNS Coordinators to work with their stormwater counterparts at the state level as well.

Q: When you refer to the State Coordinator, is that always an EPA position or can it be a State person in those states with their own program (e.g. California)?

A: The State CWNS Coordinator is always a state person. CWNS coordinators are usually within the Department of Environmental Protection. There are a few exceptions. A listing of all the state and regional CWNS coordinators is available at <http://www.epa.gov/cwns/whereyoulive.htm>.

Q: How can we get the power point used in today's presentation?

A: The power point is attached to the WebEx site. At the site epa.webex.com, use the search for a meeting function to search for CWNS. Click on the link CWNS 2008 Training: CWNS 101 Enter the session password (password= cwns2008) and click "view info." After providing the password, the powerpoint presentation that will be used for the web seminar will be a link next to course material. If you have difficulties accessing the Power Point, send a note to cwns@epa.gov and we will email it out. The powerpoint presentation that will be used tomorrow is now available at

Q: What is the address for interactive mapping tool to determine what the watersheds the needs are located in?

A: The address is <http://map8.epa.gov/enviromapper/>. You can also go to www.epa.gov/waters and click on the EnviroMapper for Water link.

Q. Should I take it that this money is for quite impaired, degraded, waterways?

A: When we refer to "impaired waters," we are using this term to refer to waters that have been submitted by the states to EPA under the impaired waters program (303d and 305b lists). There are variations on the degree of impairment, depending on how each State categorizes what type/degree of impairments is submitted to EPA. For more information on impaired waters, visit <http://www.epa.gov/305b>.